

PURIM PORTFOLIO

by Joseph Greenstein

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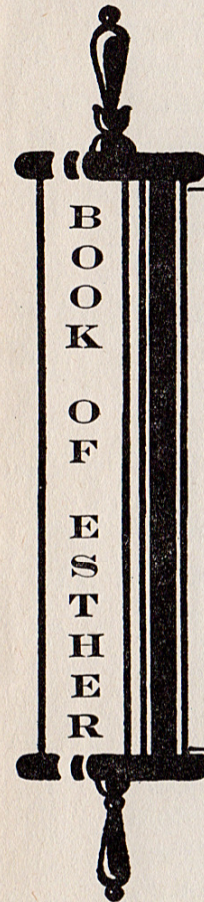
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Zionist Organization of America

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INTRODUCTION

Purim, symbolizing Jewish survival against the plottings and canards of Haman, the prototype of Hitler, has special significance in the present hour. The observance of Purim this year will help us, for a few moments at least, to forget about the misery, the blood-shed, the torment and the agony of our people. It will instil in us renewed courage and faith in mankind and give us the assurance that Am Yisroel Chay, that the plans of the modern Hamans will be frustrated, that civilization will prevail and the Jewish people will survive.

Perhaps the foremost lesson which Purim should hold for twentieth century Jewry, perhaps the most significant of its messages, is the one emphasizing the status of the Jewish people. In this respect the Jews of ancient Persia were hardly different from the Jews of medieval France, or recent czarist Russia, or contemporary Germany. Everywhere they were regarded as outsiders, interlopers, strangers — a people whose ways and manners and customs differ from the other peoples among whom they dwell. Such very difference was sufficient to set them apart, and to make them the objects of scorn, derision, persecution and pogrom. Haman and Torquemada and Chmielnicki and Hitler all observed the same truth: that Jews are in the physical and national sense disorganized and defenseless, and it was this lack of status which made them always the first victims.

Haman's plans did not succeed, but salvation was temporary. The Jews were rescued from Persia, and saved to undergo other trials elsewhere. Only Zionists recognize that the fundamental Jewish problem is this homelessness, this lack of status, this lack of national centrality. Queen Esther saved her generation, but upon her death people were again dependent upon the hospitality of the land, and subject to the whims of whatever new ruler or new government came into power.

Without doubt there are unsung Esthers and unhonored Mordecais in the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe. By their individual deeds and acts they have been enabled to rescue individuals, to save families, but the problem in its essence remains unsolved until it has been solved for the group—for the entire people. In every generation we have confounded our Hamans, often after great suffering. Today Jewry stands up before all the world and cries out against the injustice of it all. Why must this suffering be repeated in each new generation? Why must we always look for new saviors? True salvation for the Jews lies only within the means of the collective effort of the entire nation. Such autoemancipation is today going on in Palestine, and with our help will progress, making a home for the remnant in Europe who desire to go to Eretz Israel.

I PURIM YESTERDAY AND TODAY

THE STORY OF PURIM

The story of Purim has been preserved for us in the Megillah, or Scroll of Esther, which is read each year on the occasion of the gay holiday. The story deals with an episode in the life of the Jews who lived in Persia nearly two thousand years ago, under the reign of Ahasueras, known to history as Xerxes.

A powerful monarch, not accustomed to having his wishes disobeyed, Ahasueras became unduly excited when his queen, Vashti, refused his summons to appear before his guests assembled at a large banquet. Upon advice of his councillors he had Vashti banished from the kingdom, and sought a new queen. He resorted to the device of a beauty contest, and though the fairest maidens of all the land participated, his choice fell upon a Jewish girl, Esther, a cousin of Mordecai who also was her guardian.

In the meantime antagonism arose between the self-same Mordecai and Haman, the king's right-hand man and prime minister. The Jew, refusing to bow down before any other than God, angered Haman by failing to bend the knee whenever the latter passed. Due in large measure to this fact, Haman induced the king to authorize a decree ordering all the Jews killed.

While the prime minister went busily about his preparations for the mass execution, which included erection of the tallest gallows in the capital city of Shushan, which was reserved for Mordecai, there were other developments. Unable to sleep one night, the King ordered that his Chronicles be read to him, to pass the time. The records indicated that some time before a man by the name of Mordecai (the very one) had been responsible for saving the king's life, by revealing a conspiracy undertaken by a certain Bigthan and his co-plotter, Teresh. It was further indicated that Mordecai had never been adequately rewarded for his deed. Thereupon the king consulted Haman as to his advice for means of rewarding a certain man whom the king wanted to honor.

Imagining that the king had him in mind, Haman craftily suggested that the man the king had in mind should be dressed in regal clothes, seated on the king's horse and escorted around the city to demonstrate to the entire population the honor thus paid by the king. To his chagrin, Haman learned that the object of the attention was his arch-foe Mordecai, and the prime minister himself was compelled to lead the horse through the streets.

Haman hastened his plans for revenge, and cast lots to determine the day on which the extermination of the Jews would take place. The lots fell on the 14th day of Adar, and news soon spread throughout the city of the impending massacre. At this stage Mordecai informed Esther of what was happening, and asked her to intercede with the king in behalf of the Jews. Dramatically the queen invited the king and Haman to a private dinner, led the conversation with finesse, and concluded by denouncing the prime minister, revealing that she, too, as a Jewess, would be killed if the decree were fulfilled.

Ahasuerus was horrified to discover that he had almost lost his beautiful queen, and sent Haman to the very gallows which had been erected for Mordecai. Thus Esther served her people, the villain was properly punished, Mordecai was rewarded, and the king and queen lived happily ever after.

The 14th of Adar was marked a holiday called Purim, so named after the Hebrew word for casting of lots, whereby the date was chosen. Rejoicing, feasting, masquerading, and gift-giving have been highlights of the holiday's observance ever since.

THE ROLE OF PURIM IN HISTORY

By Paul Seeley

Although Purim falls on the 14th day of Adar, so-called supplementary Purims are also celebrated on other dates by Jewish communities in various parts of the world commemorating Jewish redemption from the hands of the enemy. The following article presents an interesting historical survey of events in the last four centuries in which Jews miraculously escaped death and destruction.

The Purim festival, one of the most colorful in Jewish annals, keeps alive the story of how Haman, the Hitler of ancient times, was frustrated in his plot to destroy the Jews of Persia in the fifth century before the Christian era. In the light of Jewish history, the pages of which are studded with tragedies, it is quite natural that the Jews of other countries at other times should have instituted their own Purims to record for later generations the dangers which had been averted by their forefathers. Consequently there are many places in the world where Jews celebrate two Purims, one on the 14th of Adar in the Hebrew calendar (March 17th this year), the day which tradition tells us the intervention of Queen Esther with King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) foiled Haman, and the second on some other day which commemorates Jewish redemption from the hands of a human enemy or from a natural calamity.

The number of such extra Purims has been variously estimated as anywhere from 20 to 100. And their names—Earthquake Purim, Purim of Bandits, Gunpowder Purim, Purim of the Christians, Plum Jam Purim, and French Purim—are as bizarre as the events they commemorate are interesting.

GUNPOWDER PURIM recalls a gunpowder magazine explosion at Vilna in 1804 in which 31 persons were killed and the home of Chief Rabbi Danzig wrecked. By a miracle, the rabbi and his family escaped uninjured and so he established a special purim on the 15th day of Kislev, 10 days before Chanukah. Plum Jam Purim dates from 1731. Just four days before the regular Purim that year a Christian girl in Bohemia became ill after eating some plum jam purchased from a Jewish grocer. Other members of the family also took sick and the father died. The burgomaster ordered the arrest of the Jewish grocer on a charge of poisoning. But it was soon established that the man had died of tuberculosis so the grocer was freed. And in memory of the event he established Plum Jam Purim.

In Bulgaria the Jews celebrate the PURIM OF THE POISONED SWORD on the 9th and 10th days of Cheshvan in commemoration of an event in 1807. The governor of the city of Vedan, a noted swordsman, challenged one of his officials to a duel. The latter used a poisoned sword and the governor, who lost the duel, became critically ill. Since the duel had been fought in secret, the cause of the governor's illness was a mystery, but his physician, Chacham Bashi, who was also chief rabbi, diagnosed it as poisoning and declared the governor would die. The population then began to whisper that Jews had poisoned the governor and must therefore be destroyed. The governor, however, got wind of the plot and from his deathbed exculpated the Jews from blame.

On the Greek Island of Chios Jews celebrate the PURIM OF THE BAKER WOMAN in honor of an event that occurred in 1820 during the Greek revolt against Turkey. A Jewess who lived in one of the bastions of the city's fortified walls set up a stove during the siege and began baking bread. As she was putting the bread into the oven she accidentally rested the glowing end of her shovel near a cannon, the fuse of which took fire, causing it to explode. This awoke the Turkish soldiers who were able to repel a Greek sortie as a result of the Jewess' act. Purim of the Bandits keeps alive the memory of the narrow escape of the Jews of Adrianople in 1786 when the city was attacked by an army of mountain brigands. Although they were repulsed, the Jewish inhabitants were accused of collusion with the bandits because the latter had captured the Jewish quarter and attacked the rest of the city from that stronghold. In appreciation of their deliverance the rabbis ordained the Purim of Bandits.

The FRENCH PURIM is observed by Jews at Ancona, Italy, in memory of deliverance after almost a week's terror during the Napoleonic wars late in the 18th century. During this week, until French soldiers could arrive to save them, the synagogue was invaded, the Ark was pelted with stones and preparations were made to burn the ghetto. When the French troops arrived, many Jews were in their ranks. They heard of the danger facing their fellow Jews and hastened to them. They dispersed the attackers and, tearing the yellow badge of shame from the heads of the Jews, replaced it with the tricolor cockade. In Persia, where the original Purim began, the Jews also celebrate the Purim of the Converted Slaughterer on the 2nd day of Cheshvan. Sometime during the 13th century a Jewish ritual slaughterer was apprehended selling non-kosher meat and deprived of his position. In retaliation he turned Moslem and spread the rumor that Jews had blasphemed against Mohammedanism. The result was that the Jews were given the alternative of conversion or death. They accepted the former but before they could be converted the proselyte became ill and on his deathbed confessed to the city fathers that he had lied. Thereupon the Jews were permitted to remain in their own faith.

CAIRO PURIM takes us back to the 16th century. Ahmed Shaytan was then Turkish high commissioner in Egypt, and a Jew, Abraham de Castro, was director of the Egyptian mint. When Ahmed rebelled against the Turkish sultan and tried to make Egypt independent, Castro was ordered to issue coins stamped with the name of Ahmed, instead of the sultan. This he refused to do because he was loyal to the

Sultan, and he fled to Constantinople. In retaliation Ahmed ordered his followers to plunder the Jews and threatened them all with death unless they raised a huge sum of money by a fixed date. But Ahmed's treachery to his sultan also exposed him to treachery in Egypt and in the course of a sudden rebellion he was captured by a mob and beheaded. The day on which this miraculous delivery occurred was the 27th day of Adar, 1524, which has since been observed as Cairo Purim.

The Jews of Shirak, Persia, celebrate an interesting Purim on the second day of Heshvan. The story as told in Persian-Jewish literature of the 13th century is as follows:

Aba Alchasan was a Jewish ritual slaughterer and meat seller of Shirak. At one time there was a suspicion that on Rosh Hashonah he was selling trefe meat which he represented as kosher. The suspicion was so strong that although Alchasan was considered a pious man he was forbidden to function as a ritual slaughterer and a general prohibition to Jews against buying meat from him was issued.

That the suspicion was probably justified is evidenced by the fact that shortly after the slaughterer was punished in this fashion he became a convert and began to harass the Jews.

Since the inhabitants of Shirak were pious Mohammedans, to whom the reviling of their religion was the greatest of sins, the slaughterer convert spread a rumor that the Jews had blasphemed against the Mohammedan faith. This aroused the Mohammedan population to such an extent that the city fathers issued a decree that all Jews be killed unless they went over to the Mohammedan faith.

The Jewish population capitulated and all became converts. But in the meantime the slaughterer's conscience had begun to bother him. In a short time he became ill and died. Just before the end he called representatives of the city government to his bedside and swore before them that the Jews were innocent and that he had invented the whole story about their having blasphemed against the Mohammedan faith.

Whereupon the authorities issued an order permitting the Jews to return to their own belief. Ever since then the Jews of Shirak celebrate a Purim in commemoration of the event.

There are many other such Purims, for the lesson derived from the story of Purim, that a special Providence stands guard over the destiny of the Jewish people, has so deeply impressed itself upon the consciousness of the Jews that throughout the ages and in many lands they have applied the name of Purim to marvelous redemptions from danger. And the name of Haman, the villain of the Purim story, has become the Jewish symbol for Jew-baiter. In ancient times it was Antiochus Epiphanes and Titus. In modern times it is Hitler and his Satellites. Oddly, enough, however, not one of these extra Purims occur on the actual date of the traditional festival.

The existence of these imitation Purims justifies the assertion that every day is Purim and not, as an old Jewish ditty says: "Today is Purim, tomorrow is not."

THE LESSON OF PURIM

By A. Almi

The Persian Empire, as the Book of Esther tells us, extended from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty seven provinces in which lived many races and nationalities. They differed from each other in religion and in ways of life and made up a veritable babel of languages, gods, customs and ideas. Many of the subject nationals of the Persian Empire settled in Persia proper, some of them in the Persian capital. And yet the chroniclers of these days fail to record any riot by the indigenous Persians against the "aliens."

Haman, the Prime Minister of Persia, incidentally himself not a pure Persian, charged the Jews with being different from the others, with obeying peculiar laws and practicing peculiar customs. It was a political rather than a religious accusation. Religious antagonism to the Jews would be more conceivable in view of the basic conflict between the monothetism proclaimed by Judaism and the polytheism of the pagan religions. Moses understood it and refrained from proclaiming the Ten Commandments in Egypt, although he lived many generations after Abraham first attained the knowledge of the One God. Moses waited until the Hebrews left Egypt before issuing the Tablets which gave substance to the principle of monothetism, evidently feeling that his people's position in Egypt would be aggravated if the Ten Commandments were given in a land teeming with thousands of deities.

When the Jews attained political independence the pagan empires of Assyria and Babylonia—and later of Rome—vented their main fury on the monothetist principle of Judaism, and in their attacks on the Jewish state sought first of all the profanation and the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem. Unable to think in abstract terms, the pagans thought that by destroying the physical home of Jewish religion they would also destroy its spiritual essence. They could not conceive of a people living in a mere idea, a principle devoid of any physical embodiment. They could not believe that a faith could outlive its physical center or that a nationality could survive the destruction of its political state.

In the Persian Empire, as in Egypt before, the Jews found themselves surrounded by polytheistic and pluralistic faiths and concepts. True enough, by that time there had already crystallized itself in Persia the religion of Zoroaster which believed in two powers in the universe—the Power of Light and the Power of Darkness. This dualism was nearer Judaism than the polytheism of other religions, but yet there was in it material for religious antagonism towards the Jews. One could perhaps concoct an argument that Jews were on the side of Ahriman, the god of darkness and evil and that they were weakening the power of Ahura-Mazda, the god of light and justice.

But Haman's charges were mainly of a political nature: Jews have their own peculiar laws and customs; they are scattered among the nations and do not mix with them. We hear the same arguments from modern anti-Semites, we hear them even in America where there are so many peoples, cultures and languages. And yet these accusations are levelled only against the Jews and not against the French, the English, the Swedes, the Russians or Italians and others who have national states of their own overseas and who could more plausibly be accused of being loyal to an alien state and therefore not sufficiently loyal to America.

Why then is this charge of separate laws and customs levelled against the Jews who have no state of their own. The answer to this question is to be found in the story of the Book of Esther, in the Land of the Persians and the Medes. It is there that hatred of the Jews was first formulated into a plan for complete extermination of the Jewish population. The subject peoples of the Persian Empire in their great majorities remained in their places enjoying national and religious autonomy in their territories and living as the equals of other races and nationalities, just as the races and nationalities live today within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

But the Jews, scattered among the nations as they were, were different. How could such a people live? The others could not understand it. The pagan, as has already been said, could not conceive of an idea without a body, he could not think in abstract terms. For that reason they could not understand how a people could go on living without a territory or a political state. This mentality of the pagans was inherited by the anti-Semites of later days and even by our own assimilationists. But while the anti-Semites argue that the Jews, scattered as they are, must have a secret state somewhere, a state within a state, a "kahal" or an "International" and are therefore dangerous, our assimilationists claim that since we have no state we are nothing more than a religious community, and that since we are only that, we do not need a state either in Palestine or anywhere else.

But our anti-Zionists are influenced by fear more than by ideological thinking. They are afraid that as soon as Jews acquire a state, that very fact will throw a shadow over their Americanism, their French, British, Turkish—or what have you—loyalties . . . They are afraid—we now speak of our American Jewish anti-Zionists—that their loyalty to America will be questioned if they show a warm feeling towards Palestine. They fear they will be suspected of dual allegiance and perhaps of liking Palestine more than America . . . It does not even occur to them to ask why such suspicions are not raised against the Italians, Russians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Swedes, Poles or other members of other races who make up the aggregate of American cultures, faiths, speeches and colors . . .

To our assimilationists anti-Zionists it does not seem to occur that it is precisely because the Jews have no state of their own that our enemies can repeat the charges of Haman and that they will keep on making those charges so long as we have no Jewish territory. Our enemies believe, or pretend to believe, that a people which has no land of its own must have somewhere a secret state where its national aspirations and ideas find expression. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion were fabricated just because people think that the Jews must have something like a secret organization to take the place of a state with normal people, and that in that secret organization the Rothschilds work with the Trotskys for the subjugation of the world to the Jews.

No matter how many times we may prove these allegations to be false and ridiculous, it will not do any good, and new "proofs" of a Jewish world conspiracy will be manufactured instead of the old and discredited ones. In fact, even the Protocols long discredited by scholars and statesmen, are still being widely distributed and read. Even certain educated non-Jews are inclined to believe their authenticity. People simply cannot understand how Jews can live without something

to take the place of their political state and, since they do not see it, they imagine there is a secret organization. They know that besides the Bible, the Jews have the Talmud and the Zoahr and other "mysterious" books—mysterious because the Gentiles cannot read them and do not know what is in them—and they are sure there must be some mysterious Jewish international council, some Sanhedrin or Kahal which issues orders to Jews and which they obey.

If our own anti-Zionists were to give this matter a thought, if they were to appreciate this mentality of some non-Jews, they would realize that a Jewish state in Palestine whose existence and whose functions are public knowledge would set at naught those very suspicions and misconceptions among non-Jews which give rise to such fables as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. It is only a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine which can make us the equals of other Americans who have homelands overseas.

THE OLD MEGILLAH AND THE NEW

"It is good to die for one's country." These words were uttered by the valiant Joseph Trumpeldor when he lay dying mortally wounded in an Arab attack on Tel Hai. They are now repeated by thousands of heroic young men and women of the Palestine Yishuv who are fighting shoulder to shoulder with the forces of the United Nations in defense of democracy.

Trumpeldor died in the service of his people and of Eretz Israel three days before Purim, on the 11th Adar, 1920. Every Purim, therefore, the memory of Trumpeldor is commemorated with special services in Tel Hai and throughout Palestine.

Among the most important aspects of the cultural life of Eretz Israel are the national and religious festivals. It is the festivals—testimonies to the historical unity of the Jewish people, linking generation to generation—which chiefly help to fashion the character of life in the Yishuv.

In the creation of new forms of existence in Palestine, two tendencies prevail. The one lays emphasis on the adherence to Jewish traditions as part of the Jewish religion, which has been the main factor in preserving the Jewish people throughout the centuries of dispersion. The other looks rather to the future than to the past, seeking to create new values in place of the old. The problem of effecting a synthesis between the two points of view has received considerable attention.

In regard to the festivals, here too the two tendencies are revealed, and differences of opinion still exist as to the manner in which some of them should be observed. As far as these festivals are concerned which commemorate outstanding events in Jewish history or are bound up with the agricultural life of Israel in Biblical days, the problem of the form their observance should take hardly exists today. Thus the Yishuv is more or less agreed on the manner in which Passover, the festival of national freedom, Succoth, the festival of the gathering of the harvest, or Hanukah, the Feast of Lights commemorating the heroism of the Maccabees, should be celebrated, and the form of their observance has assumed an individual character in Palestine.

THE MEGILLATH ESTHER

But Purim is in a different category. There are divergencies of opinion concerning its significance and hence the manner in which it should be observed. The Megillath Esther as in itself a peculiar appendix, as it were to the Holy Book. There are those who see in it reference to a galuth existence and to a galuth atmosphere in the life and spirit of the people. The affair at the Court of Ahasuerus, the shtadlanuth of Mordecai, the spirit of assimilation among the women of the court, the attitude of Esther who "had not shewed her people nor her kindred," are, they feel, all manifestations of a Galuth outlook on life.

But at the same time there are those who see in the Book of Esther references to a certain national pride and self-respect: in Mordecai who would not bow down to Haman, in the proud spirit of the Jews and in the injunction of Mordecai to "gather themselves together and to stand for their lives."

But, whatever views may exist among certain Jews, the Jewish people as a whole have taken Purim to their hearts. It is a happy festival, but more than this, it satisfies two very real, if subconscious, desires among the Jews in the Galuth: the desire for a miracle to occur and to change the dreary tenor of Jewish life, and the desire to witness the vanquishing of the enemy. And thus both in the Galuth and in Palestine, Purim more than any other festival is celebrated with joy and even frivolity. In the Galuth the Purim shpiel—the origin of the Jewish theatre—was one of the most popular features of all the festivals for many centuries; it was an expression of a spirit of real jollification unfettered by ritualistic observance. And in Palestine the Jews created the Purim Carnival which brings thousands into Tel-Aviv every year to see its pageantry and its colour and to participate in the free and untrammelled gaiety that pervades the streets.

MEGILLATH TRUMPELDOR.

In the colonies of Palestine to-day Purim has a new significance. For it was during the week of its occurrence, on the 11th Adar, 1920, that Joseph Trumpeldor made his heroic stand against the Arabs at Tel Hai, which ended in his death. This event, so memorable, the anniversary of which is marked by Zionists all over the world, is of even greater significance to the labour element in Palestine than to others: for Trumpeldor was one of the great labour pioneers of the Yishuv and it was through his efforts that the Histadruth—that amazing organization of workers—was created in 1920.

And so in the colonies of Palestine the celebration of Purim has taken on a new form. Two meailloth are read: the meailloth Esther, centuries old in time, yet new in the freshness of its telling and its appeal to the reader of to-day, and the later—much later—meailloth Trumpeldor, telling a tale of courage and devotion, and giving inspiration to thousands who came after him and for whom he paved the way in a new form of life.

Trumpeldor's last words before his death were: "It is good to die for one's country." They were the words which conveyed a message in direct contradiction to their literal interpretation. They expressed in fact the conviction for which Trumpeldor had always stood: "It is good to live for one's country." He was a man who loved life, who loved humanity, who loved action, and who loved,

above all, his people; and his love for all of them found a synthesis in his life and work—and death—in Eretz Israel. Small wonder then that he has become a national hero, and that the anniversary of his death is commemorated every year in Palestine. Meetings and celebrations are held, special Trumpeldor publications regularly make their appearance, a memorial service is held at Tel Hai. The memory is indeed alive in the minds of the Yishuv, no less, if not more than that of Purim during the period of the festival. It is, however, stronger in the Kvutzoth and other labour settlements than in the towns, where the mirthful spirit of Purim prevails.

But it is more than possible that with time the two commemorations will blend into a natural, although seemingly unnatural, unity. They are commemorations which spring from two widely different sources: the one entirely joyous in character, the other tinged with tragedy and sorrow. But out of joy and sorrow the Yishuv was born. Laughter and tears were present at its birth, in its travail it rejoiced. Is it not possible that joy and sorrow will once again be united in Palestine in an old-new festival during the month of Adar?

PURIM IN PRE-WAR PALESTINE

Before the outbreak of the war, Purim was celebrated in Palestine with pageants and colorful ceremonies, reflecting the true spirit of the holiday. Nowhere is Purim observed on a grander scale than in the all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv.

The following is a vivid portrayal of the manner and spirit in which Purim was celebrated in Tel Aviv during peace time, when the special events attracted many thousands of tourists from America and other parts of the world. The Yishuv looks forward to renewing the celebrations.

TEL - AVIV

The air was really full of pleasant excitement, and not only on the day of Purim itself, but the day before and after,—in fact, though Purim fell on Monday night and Tuesday, the spirit of Purim began to be felt the Saturday before and kept on till the Saturday after. Tel-Aviv was a veritable sea of humanity. Tourists, and guests, participants in the Maccabiade had gathered together in their thousands. Jewish children of all ages ran in and out of the crowds of men and women belonging to the Yishuv and of men and women from many different countries. Bearded Jews, with the traditional "payoth" rubbed shoulders with Arabs in Tarbushes and veiled Moslem women from Jaffa, Ramleh and the neighborhood, all, apparently taking equal share in the general celebrations. There must have been about 150,000 souls thronging the streets, overflowing the balconies and roof-tops and even climbing the scaffolding of unfinished buildings to watch the Purim Procession pass by.

Hundreds of brilliant electric bulbs outlined the front of the City Hall in flat shining columns, a great cluster of light hung over the centre of Allenby Road, Tel Aviv's chief street, and electric bulbs formed the top and bottom of the nearby arches that spanned Allenby Road and were covered with gay, bright coloured figures marching in a joyful, curving procession of their own. At the other end of Tel Aviv on the large hill, a tremendous stage rose in next to no time. The back of it was painted to represent a colourful Oriental structure—the "Palace of Esther" herself. Thirty thousand people, at least, stood on the hill and watched each time one of the various performances sponsored by the city was performed on the great stage. During its short life, in fact, the Palace of Esther became a very important place to all of Tel Aviv. It seemed as substantial and familiar as any old established landmark, and thousands upon thousands of people poured into it in seemingly endless streams, and doubtless found themselves learning many things they had never before known about the geography of Tel Aviv's remotest sections.

Monday evening was ushered in by the reading of the Megillah at the Great Synagogue. The reading was measured and pleasant and adequately transmitted by loud speakers to the large crowd that filled the streets outside the synagogue. It was fortunate that the sounds were heard clearly, for half the small boys of Tel Aviv were assembled in the roadway, eagerly awaiting Haman's name as the signal to set off fire crackers. Immediately after the close of the Megillah, people began to rush to the Palace of Esther where the story of Purim was gayly acted, with song and dance and what not.

Tuesday morning the Palace of Esther belonged to the children of Tel Aviv. They dotted the hill in a bright pattern of many colours that gleamed beautifully under the flawlessly, translucently blue sky, and that seemed even brighter in contrast with the snow white of the apartment houses all about and the faint blue of the far away sea. Every one listened breathlessly to the loud speaker telling the story of Purim in a cleverly juvenilized version where the king at last angrily shouted to Haman "go hang yourself" and so Haman "got what was coming to him." All the important scenes of the story were illustrated by large, delicately coloured pictures bound together to form a tremendous book. The book stood in the middle of the stage and its leaves were turned at appropriate moments by brightly dressed page boys.

One of the happiest recollections of this Purim in Erez Israel was the untrammelled enjoyment of the youngsters which burst forth in the streets, in the squares, in schools and at the children's parties. I remember how much it impressed me when, coming into Allenby Street from a side turning, I was seized and swept off my feet into a wild "Horra" in which children and adults mingled with merriment and laughter.

The most important public event of Purim, the Carnival, had no connection with the Palace of Esther. It took place Wednesday afternoon and proceeded along the main streets of the city. Straying from the "Tarucha" the Levant Fair

grounds where it had assembled, the Carnival procession which consisted of scenes from Jewish History and from every day life in the country not lacking in humorous quips and parodies, wound its way along the gay streets. Although a light rain—rare occurrence at that time of the year—began to fall, the ardour and the spirits of the great multitude were by no means diminished. Away up at the Tarucha, Purim revels were in full swing. The Purim Play, portraying the deeds of our forefathers in Shushan in the days when Ahasuerus reigned from India to Abyssinia was visited by thousands of people. At the "Mugrabi" Tel Aviv's Opera House, the Purim Carnival Ball sped on the rejoicings.

Purimtime in Erez Israel is very beautiful. In the evenings, the soft mild air is scented with the perfume borne down from the orange groves, the sky is strewn with a million stars and every individual, stranger and resident alike, can experience in equal measure the great joy of celebrating a happy Festival on the soil of the Jewish Homeland . . .

HAIFA

Walking down Balfour Street on Erev Purim we see crowds swarming to the square in front of the Technical College. As we approach we listen to the familiar strains of the Megillah—a never-to-be-forgotten effect in the cool spring evening. The square itself is crammed tight with a crowd of old and young, children of all ages, shapes and sizes predominating. Inside the Technion the favoured few listen in comfort—outside, this enormous overflow meeting feels no less the joy of the festival. After the Megillah comes the traditional Purim song which generations of Jews have sung —

"Shoshanat Ya'a-a-kov,
Tzahalah vesame-e-e-chah!"

The Lily of Jacob rejoices and is merry. Only here in Palestine do we find the real rejoicing, the true merriment.



II PURIM LAWS, CUSTOMS, LORE

THE LAWS FOR PURIM

PURIM (CASTING OF LOTS), is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, and in leap years on the 14th day of the second Adar by the reading of the Scroll of Esther, by festivities at home, exchange of gifts and aid to the poor. Of all Jewish holidays, Purim alone is the product of Jewish life in the Diaspora. It makes a strong appeal to the Jewish people because it deals with a problem old in origin but ever new in application. Purim symbolizes to the Jew the hope that he will be victor over his enemies and that the spirit of bigotry will yet disappear from among men.

The spirit of Jewish festivity is best maintained through the family. To bring the significance of the holiday closer to the Jewish home, Purim, in addition to the special services in the Synagogue, is celebrated by a family dinner (Seudah) which begins before sunset on the eve of the 15th of Adar. Briefly the Laws for Purim are:

THE LAWS FOR PURIM

1. The Shabbos before Purim is known as "Parshas Zachor"—the Shabbos when we re-read as the Maftir portion, the paragraph reminding us not to forget what Amalek did to our fathers after the Exodus from Egypt—when they attacked our fathers when they thought they were safe—to remember at all times that the Lord will save us from Tyranny and oppression and persecution if we obey the Torah.

2. The day before Purim is "Taanis Esther"—a fast day to commemorate the fast which Esther and all the Jews observed in their appeal to the Almighty for rescue.

3. The MEGILLAH—the Scroll of Esther—is read in the synagogue immediately after Maariv, with the appropriate blessings and in the traditional tune.

4. It is customary to give 3 half-dollars before the reading of the Megillah, which money is distributed to the needy. They correspond to the half-shekel which was donated for the purchase of the public offerings in the times of the Temple. Three half-shekels are given, because in the section about "Teumah" (contributions) the word "Terumah" occurs thrice. Remember your Chumush?—if not, look it up.

5. A mourner must hear the Megillah even during the week of Shiv'ah.

6. On the morning of Purim, early services are preferable. Three men are called up to the Torah—the portion being from the 17th chapter of Sh'mos—verses eight to sixteen at the conclusion of the Sedrah of "B'shallach." Later we will take the Bible and see what these verses tell. After the Sefer Torah has been returned to the Ark, the Megillah is read. Tefillin are not removed until after the conclusion of the reading of the Megillah.

7. It is the duty of every man, woman and child to hear the Megillah read on the eve of Purim and also in the morning.

8. Gifts — known as "Sh'lach Monos" (sending of gifts) must be given to everybody. Each person must send at least 2 presents to one person. These "presents" are really "portions" of food—and usually consist of prepared foods or delicacies. In addition, each person must give 2 gifts to 2 poor people—that is a present to each, *Matonos L'evyonim*—Gifts to the Poor.

9. The Purim feast is held before sundown on the 14th day of Adar. The meal should be started while it is still daytime—but it may be continued until as late as desired.

10. Although Purim is a "half-holiday," and work is permissible, only those duties should be performed which are absolutely necessary.

11. The 15th day of Adar is called "Shushan Purim," in memory of the fact that the Jews of Shushan, the capital of Persia, celebrated Purim a day later. It is also a 'half-holiday.' "Al HaNissim" is not said, however, and marriages are permitted but they are not permitted on Purim itself, because we do not mix one "Simchah"—joyous event—with another.

PURIM CUSTOMS AND LORE

A. "Everything goes"—it has become almost proverbial that on Purim the sky's the limit. Even masquerading, such as men appearing in women's attire and vice versa (strictly forbidden in Deuteronomy 22:5) is generally overlooked on Purim.

B. Mahazit Ha-Shekel (half-shekel) reminiscent of the Shekel (the dues Jews paid to the Temple). In the same spirit that motivated the exchange of "Shalach Monos" and the sending of gifts to the poor, Jews have instituted the custom, for the eve of Purim, of making a charity collection in the Synagogue before the reading of the "Megillah."

C. "Adloyoda" a recent term, coined in Palestine, for a Purim Carnival. (Palestine has been the inspiration for practically every Jewish custom of recent birth, such as the "Oneg Shabbat", etc. Palestine creates; we of the diaspora follow.)

Adloyoda comes from the traditional Purim motto which says that on this festival one should drink Ad Lo Yoda (till one knows not the distinction between Baruch Mordecai (Blessed be Mordecai) and Arrur Haman (Cursed be Haman).

D. Haman-Taschen—three-cornered Purim cake. "Mon" (the Hebrew for the Biblical "Manna") in Yiddish means poppy seeds—which is what the Taschen (in German: pockets) of the Hamantaschen are filled with.

E. Megillah—The Scroll of the Book of Esther. Read at the evening and morning Purim services in the synagogue. The word Megillah comes from the Hebrew root "Galol" meaning "to roll," since it is rolled together. There are five Megillot: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther.

A Megillah in the vernacular is any written composition which is unduly long or verbose. Megillah is also the name for a tractate of the Talmud, dealing with the history and observance of Purim.

F. Purim and Marriage—The Talmud speaks of Purim collection for brides' dowries. It was a prevalent medieval custom for a bridegroom to read the Megillah at services. In Jerusalem, brides and grooms make certain to exchange gifts or felicitations on Purim.

G. Kreplach (small dough pouches containing chopped meat)—Traditionally, there are three special days upon which Kreplach are eaten—each associated with some kind of beating and banging.

1. Purim—when Haman is beaten.
2. Hoshannah Robboh—when there is the "beating of the willow."
3. Erev Yom Kippur—the eve of the Day of Atonement, which day has the beating of the heart in prayer.

H. Blot Out Haman—the custom of hissing, stamping, etc., at the mention of Haman's name during the Megillah reading is well known; and traces its origin to the French and German Jews of the 13th century who reasoned thusly: 1. the Bible contains the injunction "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek completely" (Deuteronomy 25:19). 2. The Midrash elaborates this passage to include "even from woods and stones." 3. Then since Amalek was generally recognized as the fore-runner of Haman and his ilk, they introduced the symbolic practice of inscribing Haman's name on two stones and striking them together vigorously so as to literally "blot it out." Ultimately only the noisemaking remained.

I. Taanit Esther—The Fast of Esther. Pious Orthodox Jews fast on the day preceding Purim, the 13th day of Adar, because that was the date originally set aside by Haman for the massacre of the Jews. It is termed Taanit Esther for it was she who then first proclaimed it.

J. Special Purims—certain fast and feast days are observed in many communities to commemorate local or individual happenings. In imitation of Purim, a "Megillah" of the event is usually read, prayers recited, etc.

There are the Purims of Cairo, Florence, Naibonne, Rhodes, Tiberias, etc. (have the pupils look them up). For example: Purim of Abraham Danzig, known as the Powder Purim. It is observed annually by the family of Danzig on the 15th day of Kislev, as a memorial of the explosion of a powder magazine at Vilna in 1804. At that time, many were killed, but Abraham and his family, though wounded, escaped death.

K. Although Esther, the heroine of the Purim story is traditionally supposed to have been selected as Queen when she won the first recorded beauty contest, some rabbinical commentators held that she was 74 years old when she became Ahasuerus' consort.

L. Because of this rabbinical reasoning, the Hebrew equivalent of Esther is Hadassah, the Hebrew numerical value of which is 74.

N. The name of God is not mentioned even once in the book of Esther.

O. Although Purim is a joyous festival, marriages do not take place on that day because of the statement: "We don't mingle happiness with happiness."

P. In the great code of Maimonides it is written that in the days of the Messiah the only sacred books which will be still remembered will be the Pentateuch and the Scroll of Esther, which is read on Purim.

Q. There is an ancient tradition that a Babylonian scholar of the third century B.C. E. Rabbi Samuel Bar Shilath, who was a highly esteemed teacher of children in his day, was descended from Haman, the Purim villain.

R. Plays dealing with the story of Esther were very common in the Europe of the Middle Ages, but they were written by Christians, not Jews and were performed by members of the clergy.

S. In some parts of the world, extremely Orthodox Jews eat turkey on Purim in memory of King Ahasuerus. Turkey reminds them of Ahasuerus because the turkey is called "tarnegol hodu" (rooster of India) in Hebrew, and Ahasuerus is reputed to have ruled from India to Ethiopia.

T. Joseph Judah Chorny, Russian-Jewish traveler of the last century, relates the following concerning the Jews of Caucasia; On Purim, when the men return home from reading the Scroll of Esther in the synagogue, the women prepare a black piece of wood in the kitchen. When the man comes into the room, he asks his wife what it is, and she says, "It is Haman." At once the man gets angry and begins to scream at his wife that she should burn it. After kicking it, they all throw it in the fire.

U. Purim, in the Sephardic quarter of Jerusalem, is a day of eating sweetmeats. The Jewish confectioners make all kinds of images for this festive day. One can see them selling, for example, the Messiah on a donkey, Elijah with a trumpet in his hand, and Haman hanging on the gallows. Because sweet things are so popular on this day, the Arabs have called this Jewish holiday "the festival of sugar."

V. In the days of the Second Temple, the day preceding Purim, that is, the thirteenth of Adar, was also a holiday. It was known as "Nicanor Day," and commemorated the defeat of Nicanor, the general of Antiochus Epiphanes, by the famous Judas Maccabeus (161 C. E.). Nicanor Day, after the destruction of the Temple, gradually disappeared—after the seventh century we hear nothing about it—but Purim became more and more popular as the centuries rolled by.

W. The Scroll of Esther, which is today read during the evening and morning of Purim, was originally read only once—during the daytime. Joshua ben Levi, great Jewish scholar of the third century C. E., is the rabbi who introduced the reading of the Megillah on the eve of Purim.

X. The Jewish "Purimspiel" is really something recent—making its appearance about the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Y. Mordecai ben Hillel of Nuremberg, one of the greatest rabbis of medieval Germany, makes the following striking statement concerning the Purim festival: The day of Purim is as great as the day on which the Torah was given to Israel.

A PURIM LEGEND

"There is a legend told of Mordecai's faith and trust in the Almighty. As Mordecai was on his way home from the king's court after Haman had informed him of his sinister plans concerning the destruction of the Jews, he met a group of Jewish children returning from school. He approached the children and asked them what Biblical verses they had learned that day.

"Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh," said the first.

"Let them take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught; let them speak, but it shall not be carried out, for G-d is with us," said another.

When Mordecai heard these verses, he felt greatly reassured, and was confident that the Jews would be saved."



III PURIM - THE JEWISH PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

ANTI - SEMITISM

By Theodore Herzl

I believe that I understand Anti-Semitism, which is really a highly complex movement. I consider it from a Jewish standpoint, yet without fear or hatred. I believe that I can see what elements there are in it of vulgar sport, of common trade jealousy, of inherited prejudice, or religious intolerance, and also of pretended self-defense. I think the Jewish question is no more social than a religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.

We are a people—one people.

We have honestly endeavored everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow-citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers, and often by those whose ancestors were not yet domiciled in the land where Jews had already made experience of suffering. The majority may decide which are the strangers; for this, as indeed every point which arises in the relations between nations, is a question of might. I do not here surrender any portion of our prescriptive right, when I make this statement merely in my own name as an individual. In the world as it now is, and for an indefinite period will probably remain, might precedes right. It is useless, therefore, for us to be loyal patriots, as were the Huguenots who were forced to emigrate. If we could only be left in peace . . .

But I think we shall not be left in peace.

Oppression and persecution cannot exterminate us. No nation on earth has survived such struggles and sufferings as we have gone through. Jew-baiting has merely stripped off our weaklings; the strong among us were invariably true to their race when persecution broke out against them. This attitude was most clearly apparent in the period immediately following the emancipation of the Jews. Those Jews who were advanced intellectually and materially entirely lost the feeling of belonging to their race. Wherever our political well-being has lasted for any length of time, we have assimilated with our surroundings. I think this is not discreditable. Hence, the statesman who would wish to see a Jewish strain in his nation, would have to provide for the duration of our political well-being; and even a Bismarck could not do that.

For old prejudices against us still lie deep in the hearts of the people. He who would have proofs of this need only listen to the people where they speak with frankness and simplicity; proverb and fairy-tale are both anti-Semitic. A nation is everywhere a great child, which can certainly be educated; but its education would, even in most favourable circumstances, occupy such a vast amount of time that we could, as already mentioned, remove our own difficulties by other means long before the process was accomplished.

Assimilation, by which I understand not only external conformity in dress, habits, customs, and language, but also identity of feeling and manner—assimilation of Jews could be effected only by intermarriage. But the need for mixed marriages would have to be felt by the majority; their mere recognition by law would certainly not suffice.

The movement towards the organization of the Jewish State I am proposing would, of course, harm Jewish Frenchmen no more than it would harm the "assimilated" of other countries. It would, on the contrary, be distinctly to their advantage. For they would no longer be disturbed in the "chromatic function," as Darwin puts it, but would be able to assimilate in peace, because the present Anti-Semitism would have been stopped for ever. They would certainly be credited with being assimilated to the very depths of their souls, if they stayed where they were after the new Jewish State, with its superior institutions, had become a reality.

We are one people—our enemies have made us one in our despite, as repeatedly happens in history. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a State, and, indeed, a model State. We possess all human and material resources necessary for the purpose.

—Judenstaat

ASSERTION OF JEWISH FAITH

By Justice Louis D. Brandeis

We recognize that with each child the aim of education should be develop his own individuality, not to make him an imitator, not to assimilate him to others. Shall we fail to recognize this truth when applied to whole peoples? And what people in the world has shown greater individuality than the Jews? Has any a nobler past? Does any possess common ideas better worth expressing? Has any marked traits worthier of development? Of all the peoples in the world those of two tiny states stand pre-eminent as contributors to our present civilization,—the Greeks and the Jews. The Jews gave to the world its three greatest religions, reverence for law, and the highest conceptions of morality. Never before has the value of our contribution been so generally recognized. Our teaching of brotherhood and righteousness has, under the name of democracy and social justice, become the twentieth century striving of America and of western Europe. Our conception of law is embodied in the American constitution which proclaim this

to be a "Government of laws and not of men." And for the triumph of our other great teaching—the doctrine of peace, this cruel war is paving the way.

While every other people is striving for development by asserting its nationality, and a great war is making clear the value of small nations, shall we voluntarily yield to anti-Semitism, and instead of solving our "problem" end it by ignoble suicide? Surely this is no time for Jews to despair. Let us make clear to the world that we too are a nationality striving for equal rights to life and to self-expression. That this should be our course has been recently expressed by high non-Jewish authority. Thus Seton-Watson, speaking of the probable results of the war, said:

"There are good grounds for hoping that it (the war) will also give a new and healthy impetus to Jewish national policy, grant freer play to their splendid qualities, and enable them to shake off the false shame which has led men who ought to be proud of their Jewish race to assume so many alien disguises and to accuse of anti-Semitism those who refuse to be deceived by mere appearances. It is high time that the Jews should realize that few things do more to foster anti-Semitic feeling than this very tendency to sail under false colors and conceal their true identity. The Zionists and the orthodox Jewish Nationalists have long ago won the respect and admiration of the world. No race has ever defied assimilation so stubbornly and so successfully; and the modern tendency of individual Jews to repudiate what is one of their chief glories suggests an almost comic resolve to fight against the course of nature."

Standing upon this broad foundation of nationality, Zionism aims to give it full development. Let us bear clearly in mind what Zionism is, or rather what it is not.

It is not a movement to remove all the Jews of the world compulsorily to Palestine. In the first place, there are 14,000,000 Jews, and Palestine would not accommodate more than one-third of that number. In the second place, it is not a movement to compel anyone to go to Palestine. It is essentially a movement to give to the Jews more, not less freedom,—it aims to enable the Jews to exercise the same right now exercised by practically every other people in the world: To live at their option either in the land of their fathers or in some other country; a right which members of small nations as well as of large,—which Irish, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian or Belgian may now exercise as fully as Germans or English.

Zionism seeks to establish in Palestine, for such Jews as choose to go and remain there, and for their descendants, a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life, where they may expect ultimately to constitute a majority of the population, and may look forward to what we should call home rule. The Zionists seek to establish this home in Palestine because they are convinced that the undying longing of Jews for Palestine is a fact of deepest significance: that it is a manifestation in the struggle for existence by an ancient people which had established its right to live—a people whose three thousand years of civilization has produced a faith, culture and individuality which enable them to contribute largely in the future as they had in the past to the advance of

civilization and that it is not a right merely but a duty of the Jewish nationality to survive and develop. They believe that there only, can Jewish life be fully protected from the forces of disintegration; that there alone, can the Jewish spirit reach its full and natural development; and that by securing for those Jews who wish to settle in Palestine the opportunity to do so, not only those Jews, but all other Jews will be benefited and that the long perplexing Jewish Problem will, at last, find solution.

ZIONISM AND PATRIOTISM

Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with Patriotism. Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent. A man is a better citizen of the United States for being a loyal citizen of his state and of his city; for being loyal to his family, and to his profession or trade; for being loyal to his college or his lodge. Every Irish-American who contributed towards advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so.

There is no inconsistency between loyalty to America and loyalty to Jewry. The Jewish spirit, the product of our religion and experiences, is essentially modern and essentially American. Not since the destruction of the Temple have the Jews in spirit and in ideals been so fully in harmony with the noblest aspirations of the country in which they lived.

THE ETERNAL PROBLEM

By Leo Pinsker

The eternal problem presented by the Jewish question stirs men today, as it did ages ago. It remains unsolved, like the squaring of the circle, unlike which, however, it is still a burning question. This is due to the fact that it is not merely a problem of theoretic interest but one of practical interest, which renews its youth from day to day, as it were, and pressed more and more imperiously for a solution.

The essence of the problem, as we see it, consists in the fact that, in the midst of the nations among whom the Jews reside, they form a heterogeneous element which cannot be assimilated, which cannot be readily digested by any nation. Hence the problem is to find means of so adjusting the relations of this exclusive element to the whole body of the nations that there shall never be any further basis for the Jewish Question.

We cannot, of course, think of establishing absolute harmony. Such harmony has probably never existed, even among the other peoples. The millennium in which the "International" will disappear, and the nations will merge into humanity is still invisible in the distance. Until it is realized, the desires and ideals of a nation must be limited to establishing a tolerable *modus vivendi*.

The world will have to wait long for universal peace; but meantime the relations of the nations to one another may be adjusted fairly well by an explicit mutual understanding, an understanding based upon international law, treaties, and especially upon a certain quality in rank and mutually conceded rights, as well as upon mutual esteem.

No such equality in rank appears in the intercourse of the nations with the Jews. In the latter case the basis is lacking for that mutual esteem which is generally regulated and secured by international law or by treaties. Only when this basis is established, when the equality of the Jews and other nations becomes a fact, can the problem presented by the Jewish Question be considered solved.

—Auto-Emancipation

THE TEST

By Ludwig Lewisohn

. . . It is useless for a Jew to say today, I am not a Zionist. If this work stagnates, if this task fails, if this experiment is permitted to be overwhelmed by difficulties, by sloth, by niggardliness, the nations who gave us our right in the land of the fathers will not ask: How many Zionists were there? How many non-Zionists? What private quarrels, what vain fears, what old self-seeking, what ambition of local and transitory Gentile favor impeded this creative enterprise? They will not ask these questions. They will say, You have not the character nor the cohesion nor the dignity nor the strength of a people. They will offer us the old dilemma between complete assimilation and extinction. Our minority rights in eastern Europe will be a thing of jeers and contumely! our people in central Europe will be driven to the ignominy of a false apostasy. Nor let the prosperous merchant or lawyer in Cleveland or Kansas City imagine that, if he but gives a little charity, this matter does not touch him. He can close his hear and mind to the fate of his people. He cannot protect himself or his children from being unescapably involved in that fate. The upbuilding of Palestine has become test and symbol and decision in the councils of the nations and the consciousness of mankind . . .

— Israel

THE CALL

It is no accident that all our generations thought of redemption, but were not privileged to establish it. The whole people recognized the tragedy of the Galuth, recognized that there was no cure but redemption and normal existence in the land of its fathers. But the dream had to suffice, for it did not believe in its strength and will and power of practical activity. And even when the enthusiasm of 30 years ago rose to interpret the dream into practical achievement, the movement was unable to reach in one day that last phase of living reality. In our generation we must discipline ourselves for a long while. But if we really desire it then it is possible, for possibility will come with genuine and complete desire.

At this moment let us call to our brethren, to the youth in all the countries of the world—No whit shall we falter in our devotion. We stand in our place in Eretz Israel. Here we shall live, and here we shall die, for we have no other place.

— Chaim N. Bialik

ZIONISM AND AMERICAN JEWRY

- A. A timely topic for discussion groups.
 - 1. Importance of Zionism as a solution of the Jewish Problem.
 - 2. Zionism must permeate all spheres of Jewish activity.
- B. Why should the American Jew be a Zionist?
 - 1. To satisfy our sense of responsibility for Jewish suffering throughout the world.
 - 2. Help solve permanent Jewish problem of landlessness.
 - 3. Need for cultural center.
 - 4. Need of "address" for Jewish affairs.
- C. Place of Zionism in American Jewish life.
 - 1. American Jews need Zionism as
 - a. Source of renewed cultural life
 - b. Restores self-respect
 - c. Proves Jewish life wider than Creed (Milton Steinberg: "The Creed of an American Zionist"—ZOA)
 - d. Affords Nationalist basis and pattern for American Jewish Community organizations
 - e. Has developed new religious movements in Palestine which have a lesson and promise for Jewish people in America
 - f. Basis for American Jewish Education.



IV PURIM PLANS FOR THE DISTRICT

SOME SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Purim symbolizes the defeat of an arch tyrant and the deliverance of the Jewish community from oppression. Every Zionist District should mark the occasion with special functions devoted to the rehabilitation and salvaging from the hands of the modern tyrants the remnants of our people through their settlement in the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. The program should underscore the fact that as long as we have no state—we have a Haman and a Purim in every age.—Zionism is the solution to the problem.

IN THE DISTRICT

- 1. Purim Ball in honor of returning veterans.
- 2. Purim Seudah in honor of new members — (or membership breakfast—or or Purim party for workers).
- 3. "Shalach Monoth" for the Jewish National Fund.
- 4. Purim issue of the district newsletter.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- 1. Designate Purim Sunday, March 17th as Zionist Day in your community. Co-sponsor a rally with other Jewish and non-Jewish groups who favor Palestine.
- 2. Co-sponsor with the synagogue "Zion Sabbath," utilizing a rally, the sermon, the Friday Night Forum, and/or the Oneg Shabbat.
- 3. Strengthen the Zionist family by having a joint meeting with another district, Hadassah and the youth groups.
- 4. Cooperate with the Religious Schools in your community by sponsoring an Essay Contest on Purim and Palestine; by showing a Palestine film at the Purim assembly; by addressing assemblies and visiting classes.
- 5. Enlist the press in our behalf. Request local newspapers—English, Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish — in addition to reporting news of meetings to use other material relating to Purim and Zionism. Much of the material offered herein lends itself to revision for editorial and feature story purposes.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

This portfolio contains interesting and valuable background material and suggestions which can be profitably utilized to enhance the interest and content of your Purim celebration. Much of the material offered herein lends itself to revision for editorial and feature story purposes.

Some select resources and references are:

1. General Information

Purim, A Day of Laughter, H. E. Goldstein, Hebrew Pub. Co.
Purim, An Historical Study, N. S. Doniach, Jewish Pub. Soc.
Story of the Jewish Holidays, D. F. Zelig, pp. 126-148,
The Jewish Holiday: 250 Questions and Answers, M. Soltes,
pp. 34-35, 72-75

The Jewish Festivals, H. Schauss, pp. 237-271

2. Programs and Anthologies

Purim Portfolio, Board of Jewish Education, Chicago
Purim Bulletin, Jewish Welfare Board, 45 E. 32nd St., N. Y. C.
Purim Program, Young Judaea, 381 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.
Purim Portfolio, Joseph Greenstein, Council for Orthodox Jewish Schools,
1133 Broadway, New York 10, New York

3. Bibliographies

Library Bulletin, Jewish Education Committee, 1776 Broadway, New York
City — complete bibliography on Purim, 3c.
Index for Religious Schools and Clubs compiled by H. M. Friedman,
Union of American Hebrew Cong. Cincinnati, Ohio, pp. 70-83

A SUGGESTED PROGRAM

(On the pages immediately following you will find the items mentioned in this program, with explanations for their use, and/or pertinent resource material.)

PURIM MOTIF

(Set the tone and atmosphere of the meeting with appropriate decorations.)

OPENING

America
Bible Reading
Chairman's Opening Remarks

'LET US SING'

(Create a receptive mood and arouse the enthusiasm of the audience with community singing.)

HIGHLIGHT OF THE EVENING

(The main part of the program should consist of one or more of the following):

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Recitations | 4. Quiz |
| 2. Speaker or discussion | 5. Purim slides |
| 3. Dramatics | 6. Purim dances |

CLOSING

Chairman's Remarks
Hatikvah
Refreshments (Hamantaschen)

PURIM MOTIF

The decorations assignment may be given to the pupils of the religious school or to the Youth Clubs.

1. From Bloch Publishing Co. — 31 West 31st St., New York City
"Purim Ceremonial objects," 'Cut-Outs.' Printed on heavy paper to be cut out and constructed. Three objects, Purim Mask, Purim Crown, Sh'lach Monos Box. Assorted if desired, per dozen 45c.
2. Purim Masks — can be made of papier mache or from paper bags with grotesques of Purim characters painted on them. (Instructions for making groggers out of cardboard and for making masks out of papier mache are contained in the "Arts-Craft Guide — Jewish Festival Series" by Temima N. Gezari. Copies of these two pages can be obtained from the Jewish Education Committee, 1776 Broadway, N. Y. C. at 6c each. The cards are 9½ x 11, and the directions are in words and in pictures. On the reverse side of each card is a photograph suitable for framing.

Selected References:

- (A) PURIM PROBLEMS AND PROJECTS (Board of Jewish Education, Chicago)
- (B) JEWISH ARTS AND CRAFTS, "Purim Suggestions", by Paul Veret, Bulletin No. 57
- (C) FESTIVAL CRAFTS IN THE JEWISH CENTER, by Temima N. Gezari — Purim Masks — Chapter
- (D) ARTS AND CRAFTS FOR THE JEWISH CLUB, by Comins & Leaf — pp. 144, 145, 184, 224, 230; (all can be gotten from Bloch Publishing Co.)

INVITATIONS

"A PROCLAMATION"

- "1. Whereas the jolly festival of Purim is rapidly approaching, the pupils of (name of district) are hereby bidden to set aside the evening of the 14th day of Adar of the Jewish year . . . on which to make merry.

(signed) President Zionist District

2. PURIM PARTY!

BE SURE TO COME
IF YOU DON'T

YOU'LL MISS 'SOME FUN'!

3. An invitation in the form of a Megillah — to read as follows: "Now it came to pass in the days of . . . (name of district) which reigns over the fun and recreation of all good Jews in . . . (name of locality) that in those days a decree was issued by the Program Committee of . . . (name of district) that the Feast of Esther should be observed this year, as it has always been observed with joy and merriment . . . and it was further decreed that all good members of the . . . (name of district) and with them all their

friends should assemble on Purim, which is on the (date) on the month of.....(year) and make merry at the Purim Ball, which the district has arranged and which will be bigger and better than any ever arranged before. It was further ordered that for all the good times there be no charges so that all may come and make merry and forget the hard times in the memory of the great deeds which the Lord has done of yore to our children of Israel and which he will again repeat in his own good time."

BIBLE READINGS

For your Purim Celebration the following is appropriate:

- A. Passages from the Book of Esther.
- B. Exodus 17:8 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19 (Included in the Torah reading at the Purim morning service)
- C. Psalms 20 and 124
- D. From The Synagogue School, March 1946:

FOR THY MIRACLES AND THY WONDERS

Responsive Reading for Purim

- Reader:** Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who girdest Thy people Israel with might.
- Cong.:** Thou hast been the help of our fathers from of old,
A Savior to their children in every generation.
- Reader:** Our God, our King, rid us of every oppressor.
Close the mouths of our enemies.
- Cong.:** Save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
Let Thy loving-kindness be upon us forever.
- Reader:** O Guardian of Israel, guard the remnant of Israel,
And allow not Thy people Israel to perish.
- Cong.:** We give thanks unto Thee and declare Thy praise
For Thy miracles which came in the month of Adar
In the days of old, at this season of the year.
- Reader:** When Haman, the son of Hamdatha, the enemy of the Jews,
Planned to destroy the Jews throughout the land.
- Cong.:** Then Esther came before the king who commanded that Haman's
wicked plans against the Jews should return upon his own head;
and Haman and his sons were hanged upon the gallows.

- Reader:** And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews that were in the provinces of King Ahasuerus, that the Jews should keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and the fifteenth day too as festivals.
- Cong.:** These days recall that the Jews rested from their enemies;
And the month of Adar was turned from sorrow to joy.
- Reader:** These days of Purim have been kept, and should be kept and remembered throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city.
- Cong.:** These days are days of feasting and joy,
And of sending gifts one to another and to the poor.
- All:** If any design evil against us speedily O God make their counsel of none effect. May there always be abundant peace from heaven and life for us and all Israel, and let us say, Amen.

LET US SING

1. Appropriate songs are YOM PURIM, CHAG PURIM, PURIM DAY, GOOD PURIM, WICKED, WICKED MAN, SHU SHU, SHUSHAN, SIM SHALOM, EIN KELOHENU, SHOMER YISRAEL, AM YISRAEL CHAI, etc.
 2. From the Z.O.A. Education Department you may obtain a Purim Songsheet containing the following songs in Hebrew, transliteration and English. SHO-SHANOAS YAAKOV, IN SHU, SHU, SHUSHAN, CHAG PURIM, A WICKED MAN. (50c per 100 song sheets)
 3. *Selected References*
 - A. Little Books of Jewish Songs (Chicago Bureau of Jewish Education)
 - B. Songs of Zion. H. Coopersmith, p. 186-194
 - C. MUSIC from Jewish Education Committee, Music Department, 1776 Broadway, New York City
 - "Purim Time Is Here", a dramatized Purim song, suitable for presentation at carnivals or entertainments, Hebrew, Yiddish and English, words and music (25c)
 - "Purim Songster" containing 32 songs in Hebrew, English and Yiddish, printed (5c)
- Three sheets with words, music and piano accompaniment for the following songs: Shoshanas Yaakov, Heint Iz Purim, Utsu Eytsa Ve'tufar, printed (5c each, 10c set)

PURIM RECITATIONS

HADASSAH

By

Jessie E. Sampter

I love to think of Esther,
A simple Jewish maid,
When in her uncle's house she lived
And happily obeyed,
Before she thought of Shushan,
Its splendor and its gloom,
Or dreamed her deed of faith might save
Her people from its doom.
Her mind had then the sweetness,
Her heart the courage high,
That later bade her say "I go,
And if I die, I die."

MORDECAI

By

H. H. Jackson

Make friends with him! He is of royal line
Although he sits in rags. Not all thine
Array of Splendour, pomp or high estate,
Can buy him from his place within the gate,
Never obeisance making, never scorn
Betraying of thy silver and new-born
Delight. Make friends with him, for unawares
The charmed secret of the joys he bears;
Be glad, so long as his black sackcloth, late
And early, thwarts thy sun, for if in hate
Thou plottest for his blood, thy own death-cry,
Not his, comes from the gallows cubits high.

A PURIM POEM

By

Isabella R. Hess

You know the tale of Queen Esther,
The queen so well named the "Star",
And of Mordecai, humble and faithful,
Who guided her life from afar.
Long, long ago lived Queen Esther!
But you must be Esthers too,
You maidens with eyes so thoughtful,
Who bear the proud name of Jew!
And you boys with your hearts a-flaming
With the dawn of your manhood's might,
Remember how Mordecai humble
Stood firm for his faith — and the right!
How, clad in his sackcloth and ashes,
As he sat in the dust by the gate,
Yet he pointed the way to Queen Esther
To suffer, and dare, and be great.
You know how the old story ended —
How Haman the dastard at last
Met the fate he had planned for another —
And Israel's danger was past!
But Israel needs now, as ever,
Strong hearts that are fearless and true,
And the honour that Mordecai guarded
Is left now, dear children, with you.
Be fearless! Nay, why should you falter,
When God ever guardeth the right?
Be loyal! The faith of your fathers
Hath shown through dark years like a light!
And if ever you tire in the struggle,
And the right seems o'ercome and afar,
Then remember the old Purim story,
The story of Esther the "Star"

SPEAKER OR DISCUSSION

For a comprehensive evaluation of the significance of Purim in your group discussion the following major highlights are outlined as a basis for such discussion:

- 1) Haman — Hitler's desire to exterminate Jewry; the typical accusations leveled against the Jews by both Hamans.
- 2) The Need For Unity of Action — the responsibility that each individual Jew must bear towards his fellow Jew.
- 3) The Jewish Struggle for Survival—the valiant Yishuv in Palestine fighting heroically for freedom, while continuing to build and create.
- 4) The Obligations and Duties of American Jews — modern successors of Mordecai and Esther.
- 5) Generosity and Unselfishness in the Observance of Purim —

SKELETON ADDRESS ON HAMAN

(Build up your speech making use of the following points.)

Correlate the Haman incident with similar incidents in Jewish history. Every country in practically every age has its own Haman.

1. Haman — his plot against the Jewish people — his end.
2. Torquemada, the infamous Grand-Inquisitor of Spain, influenced the Spanish King and Queen to persecute the Jews with the utmost rigor and cruelty, and ultimately to issue a decree which forced thousands of them to leave the country in which they had lived for countless generations.
3. Chmelnitski lead an uprising of Cossacks — whole Jewish communities were wiped out. Crusades—a fanatical priest—massacres of Jews.
4. In modern times we had a Hitler who was bent upon conquering the world and exterminating the Jews.

The Jew is placed in such a precarious position where any miserable adventurer may jeopardize his very existence because he has no recognized home of his own. Palestine rebuilt will solve the Haman difficulty.

DRAMATICS

1. PURIM PLAYS — Annotated bibliography of plays in Hebrew and in English for Purim. The plays are fully synopsisized and evaluated. Complete information is given regarding the age group for which each play is suitable, physical requirements as to costumes, scenery, etc. 10c per set. Jewish Education Committee, 1776 Broadway, N. Y. C.
2. A Purim Shadowgraph will be found in Purim Portfolio (Chicago Board of Education).
3. Purim Puppets Show will be found in manual for Hebrew Kindergarten issued by Council of Orthodox Jewish Schools.
4. The Purim Story lends itself to Charades and Dramatic Improvisations.
5. Section III of this portfolio can be done as a "Living Newspaper".
6. A Purim Injunction. (Playlet)

A PURIM INJUNCTION

(may be produced without costumes or rehearsals)

- Scene:** (Judgment Seat — On the bench sits the great judge, before him the complainants — all the Jewish holidays. In the prisoner's dock — Purim, the indicted one.)
- All:** (Shouting together) We want an injunction against Purim, against everything connected with him.
- Judge:** (Pounding his gavel) Jewish holidays! You are too noisy. Let each in turn tell us his troubles. Chanukah, will you please tell the Court the reason for your being here?
- Chanukah:** (Rises) I desire to have an injunction issued against Purim until he proves his right to occupy such an important and honorable place among us Jewish holidays. Why is he so proud? What has he done? Is it such a great thing that Esther, a Jewish girl, was the queen of Ahasuerus, and Mordecai, a Jew, was second to the king? The king must have been a fool, a drunkard, a man minus character. When Haman wanted to lead him by the nose and kill all Jews, he submitted. Esther came and urged him to do the opposite, so he did her bidding. It was this foolishness, the lack of backbone of the king, that brought with it the entire Purim celebration. The Jews ought to be ashamed of a holiday created through so foolish a person as Ahasuerus. Instead of that, they read this story every year, eat Purim loaves, Haman cakes filled with prunes and poppy seed, kreplich and so many other goodies. I, Chanukah, on the other hand, I, the holiday of the Maccabees, of the heroes who fought so valiantly for their country and for their Torah, who upheld national ideals, I have to content myself with mere latkes and with the burning of tiny candles that are bought for a few pennies. My heroes were proud of their origin. They compelled others to respect their people, while Esther was ashamed of her origin, as witness the story bearing her name. She dared not say who her people were. And this Purim boasts as the one holiday the Jews will never discard. What entitled him to such honor, to such esteem? Why do they make so much of him? If God wanted to perform a miracle by saving the Jewish people from their enemy, comes Mr. Purim and claims the credit and gets a fine loaf and Haman cakes. Such a nobody, such a schlemil, such a ———.
- Judge:** (Bringing down his gavel) Silence! We do not permit any person to insult another in court. (Turning to Passover) You are older and I expect you to be wise. Tell us your story.

Passover:

(Bowing politely) Yes, I am older than the other Jewish holidays, I may feel prouder than any of them. I do not mean to insult anyone. But I wish to say that I consider it a dishonor to be registered in the same calendar with so lowly a holiday as Purim. I am the remembrance of the liberation of an entire people from slavery. Through me slaves have become citizens. I am the festival of freedom, the holiday of salvation. What has Purim done? He is merely a holiday born in slavery. The tyrant Ahasuerus, while drunk, wanted to pride himself about his wife. The queen, even though she was merely a Vashti, managed to show here independence and her womanly dignity. Vashti refused to be a blind, obedient slave. Is that a reason for the eating of goodies by the Jews of today? Vashti wanted to act as a noble woman should, and she was severely punished by her brutal husband. And now Purim claims a place of honor among the Jewish holidays. And when two noble revolutionists, Toresh and Bigthan wanted to bring freedom to one hundred and twenty-seven nations, to free them from the tyranny of a despot by doing away with him, Mordecai denounced them to the tyrant. Thus he became to be the favorite of Ahasuerus. How can Pesach and Purim be spoken in the same breath? In my story appears the sentence: "And each man shall be king in his own home." Either do away with Purim or let the kneidlach, the Hagodah, the four cups, the Had Gadya and the ten plagues be suppressed.

Shevuoth:

I am the only holiday which brings the Jews in touch with Mother Nature. I am the festival of growth and bloom of trees and flowers. I am the song of spring, the music of life. Purim, on the other hand, is a holiday of food and drink, of mask and ridicule. I am the festival of abundant nature while Purim is the festival of beggars. To class Shevuoth with Purim is the greatest insult that the Jew could bring Mother Nature.

Succoth:

I am the festival of contentment and peace. I am the symbol of the days when the Jews led a peaceful shepherd life and lived in booths. I am the festival of green palms, the emblem of love and peace. What is Purim? — a story of horrors and bloodthirst. Is it necessary then to repeat the story every year? I demand that an injunction be issued against Purim, or I shall renounce my Succah and my esrog and lulab, my palms, in a word, I renounce everything connected with my name.

Judge:

(Arising and addressing those present) Listen to me and I shall tell you my decision. Purim is the only free and easy-going holiday in which there are no prayers, no special prayer-books, no ceremonial. The Jew is free on that holiday, to amuse himself in any way he sees fit. It is the Jewish carnival. It is the Jew's season of joy. No other story tells so many worthy things of Jews. They defended

themselves against their enemies, but their hand touched nothing by way of plunder. The most important point of the story is that Mordecai was not content with his own good fortune. He was devoted to his people. His Esther was a queen, yet he mourned with his people and wore the sackcloth and ashes. All others bowed before Haman, the powerful, but Mordecai, though covered with ashes and mourning over his misfortunes of the Jew, refused to bow before anyone. He knew that as a man and as a Jew he must bow before no one. Human pride and dignity are the consciousness of moral power and within it is the strongest power in the world. With it all the Hamans of our day, those who become related to Ahasuerus forget their people, bend their head and bow their knee to those who appear to be somebody — that again cannot be said to be the fault of Purim. Purim, you are a very sympathetic and pleasant holiday. Go to the Jewish people and remind them of Haman and tell them of Mordecai. Bring them joy with your Haman cakes and other goodies, which they taste so seldom. Encourage them. Let them have joy and happiness. This is your mission, Purim.

(Adapted from Yiddish, by Jacob Gordin)

QUIZ

The basic material for a quiz is in section II of this portfolio.

PURIM SLIDES

May be reserved at the library of the Jewish Education Committee, 1776 Broadway, New York City. The set consisting of 19 slides, rents for 95c. A machine may also be rented for a charge of \$1.00. A deposit of \$5.00 is required on the slides and \$10.00 on the machine.

PURIM DANCES

Directions for 8 children's dances: Persian Harem Dance, Purim Chassidic Dance, American Group Celebration of Purim, Spirit of Purim, Tel Aviv Carnival, Purim Players, Misloach Monos Carriers and Purim, set of 8—25c. (Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1776 Broadway, New York City.)